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## CRITICAL NOTICES.

DR. FRIEDLÄNDER'S NEW EDITION OF  
MAIMONIDES' *GUIDE*.

*The Guide for the Perplexed*, by MOSES MAIMONIDES, translated from the original Arabic Text by M. FRIEDLÄNDER, Ph.D. Second edition, revised throughout. (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1904; pp. lix and 414.)

THE new edition of Dr. Friedländer's well-known, and deservedly well-known, translation of Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* suggests pleasant thoughts that bring sad thoughts to the mind. A quarter of a century has elapsed since the Committee of the Hebrew Literature Society persuaded the learned Principal of Jews' College to take upon himself the onerous, if honourable, task of rendering the *Guide* into English. Time has wrought many changes during the interval, some of them regrettable enough, as the following extract from Dr. Friedländer's Preface to the second volume may suggest: "The Hebrew Literature Society, under whose auspices the first volume of the *Guide* was published, has since ceased to exist. The present volume and the next are, as it were, the posthumous work of the society, which may thus be said to have continued its publications beyond the limits of its short existence. This is chiefly due to the generous efforts of Mr. F. D. Mocatta." And now, to the universal sorrow of Jewry, Mr. Mocatta, too, has been taken from us. That is sad, though not altogether without compensations. The higher functions of the defunct Hebrew Literature Society are now, and have been for many years, exercised by the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, while the Union of Jewish Literary Societies is carrying on the more popular part of the work of the older society. Happily, too, though Mr. Mocatta could but ill be spared, Anglo-Jewry can still boast of more than one Maecenas. There is even some likelihood that the memory of Mr. Mocatta will be worthily perpetuated by the establishment of a Mocatta Museum and Library, from which the aims of the Hebrew Literature Society, which he

had so much at heart, would receive no little advancement. Such an institution, moreover, would render an invaluable service to that comparative and historical treatment of Judaism which, though with obvious and inevitable limitations, received its first noteworthy expression in Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*.

By his translation of the *Guide*<sup>1</sup>—a translation of which the late Prof. David Kaufmann has expressed a very high estimate<sup>2</sup>—Dr. Friedländer has put his numerous disciples and readers under a great obligation. Unhappily, the first edition of the translation, in three volumes, was not only too costly for most students, but has long been out of print, and very difficult to procure. With characteristic considerateness, Dr. Friedländer has devoted his scant leisure and much-taxed strength to remedy this by preparing the present edition, in which the three volumes of the first edition have been reduced to one volume, and the price has been more than correspondingly reduced, so as to bring the work within the reach of all students of theology and Jewish literature.

In reducing the thousand pages, or so, of the first edition to less than half that number in the new edition, something had of course to be sacrificed. Although the pages of the new edition are larger, and the type is smaller (though readable withal), all the notes have had to be eliminated. Two references to notes (pp. xxxix f.) raise the reader's hopes only to disappoint them again<sup>3</sup>. The notes are all gone, and will be missed, especially by students of the Arabic text and of the Hebrew versions of the *Guide*. Still, the essential requirements for the study of the book are there. In addition to the translation, the volume contains a short *Life* of Maimonides (reproduced, without alteration, from vol. I of the first edition), an account of the Moreh Nebuchim Literature (reproduced, with additions, from vol. III), and all the Indexes of the first edition except the Ritual Index with its solitary reference.

Turning first to Dr. Friedländer's *Life of Maimonides*, it is very gratifying to observe that Dr. Friedländer's contention, that Maimonides was at no time a crypto-Mohammedan, has prevailed over the opposite view of Carmoly, Geiger, Graetz, and Munk, and is now generally accepted. The view that Maimonides was for a time a pseudo-apostate was based, to a considerable extent, on the lenient

<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (vol. IX, p. 81a) erroneously gives 1889 as the year in which it was first published. The first volume was published in 1881, the second and third volumes were published in 1885.

<sup>2</sup> See *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. XI, p. 372.

<sup>3</sup> Another reminiscence of the first edition is met with on p. 382, l. 5, where the reference to p. 205 should have been altered to p. 349.

attitude towards compulsory conversion adopted in the *Letter concerning forced Apostasy*, which is commonly ascribed to Maimonides. Originally, Dr. Friedländer endeavoured to demolish this argument by an attempt to disprove the authenticity of this letter. The long note (vol. I, pp. xxxiii–xl) in which the case was stated against the Maimonidean authorship of the letter does not reappear in the present edition, but Dr. Friedländer is still of the same opinion. On the other hand, Prof. D. S. Margoliouth, while siding with Dr. Friedländer against the supposed pseudo-apostasy of Maimonides, holds that the letter under consideration was written by Maimonides. In reply to the argument that “if Maimonides were the author he would probably have written in Arabic,” Prof. Margoliouth contends that certain expressions in the Hebrew betray it to be a translation from an Arabic original; the other arguments he considers to be mostly subjective in character, and inconclusive. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* is very amiable, and agrees with everybody. In one place (vol. I, p. 81 a) we are told that “Maimonides wrote this essay . . .,” soon afterwards it is added that “some scholars . . . on very good grounds . . . doubt Maimonides’ authorship of this essay,” while elsewhere (vol. II, p. 18 b) we are assured that the genuineness of this same essay or letter “has been convincingly refuted by M. Friedländer.” Who shall decide when specialists are divided? Be that as it may, Dr. Friedländer’s main contention, that Maimonides was never a pseudo-Mohammedan, is really in no wise affected even if the letter is regarded as a genuine writing of Maimonides. For, as Prof. Margoliouth puts it, “the fact of his taking a lenient view of the act of pronouncing the Mohammedan profession of faith, and thinking the matter one not worth dying for, surely need not prove that he had himself followed that course”<sup>1</sup>.

Among the few additions to the Moreh Nebuchim literature, two are of special interest, not only for their intrinsic worth, but also as further contributions from Jews’ College—namely, the delightful little book on Maimonides by Mr. Israel Abrahams and David Yellin, and the manuscript fragments of the Arabic text of the *Guide* recently discovered, in the Cairo Genizah at Cambridge, by Dr. H. Hirschfeld, who thinks that they are in Maimonides’ own handwriting<sup>2</sup>.

Coming to the text of the translation, it is readily seen that the translation has been carefully revised throughout for the new edition. Not only are the *errata* of the first edition corrected now in the body

<sup>1</sup> *J. Q. R.*, vol. XIII, p. 541.

<sup>2</sup> See *J. Q. R.*, vol. XV, pp. 677 f. One of the four pages of the MS. is also reproduced in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. IX, p. 75.

of the book, but there are also many other improvements tending mostly to greater precision and lucidity of expression, and occasionally indicating a different interpretation. A few examples may serve to illustrate the varying degrees of importance attaching to the emendations.

P. 6, l. 23, "vessels," instead of "pictures," vol. I, p. 15.

P. 20, last line, "authors," in place of "orators" vol. I, p. 51.

P. 48, l. 23, "common sense," instead of "innate ideas," vol. I, p. 125; the view expressed in the note seems, therefore, to be abandoned.

P. 5, l. 12, "theologian," in place of "rabbi," vol. I, p. 13. The new translation agrees with note 4, vol. I, p. 10, but presumably indicates that the suggestion advocated in note 1, vol. I, p. 13, has been relinquished.

P. 24, ll. 10 f., "Thus we find, 'Who sitteth over the circle of the earth' (Isa. xl. 22), Who remains constantly and unremittingly over the sphere of the earth; that is to say, over the things that come into existence within that sphere." The older version continued thus after the quotation from Isaiah: "Who presides constantly and unremittingly over the circuit of the earth; that is to say, over its revolution; the prophet refers in this term to those things on earth which are in perpetual revolution" (vol. I, p. 59). The revised rendering obviates no slight difficulties, and shows a modification of the standpoint adopted in note 3, vol. I, pp. 59 f.

It is very interesting to observe how in quite a number of instances the new renderings have obviated difficulties and the need of explanatory notes<sup>1</sup>.

Abraham Abulafia's mnemonic for the 177 chapters of Maimonides' *Guide*, םלל ןל, reminds one, appropriately enough, of the Talmudic story (to which Maimonides himself refers several times) about the four Rabbis who visited Paradise with such different results. For centuries the *Guide* has been such a Paradise to thousands of Jewish intellectuals—teaching sometimes piety to rationalists, and sometimes

<sup>1</sup> We venture to suggest, in all modesty, that a slight difficulty, and the need of the explanation given in the first edition, might have been similarly obviated in the second sentence on p. 185, by a closer adherence to Ibn Tibbon. This is the passage: "For the common substance at first received four different forms, and each form was endowed with two qualities, and through these four qualities the substance was turned into the elements of which all things are formed." Why not "and, through these qualities, the four (forms) became the elements," &c.? This would obviate even the appearance of inconsistency. Cf. Abarbanel *ad loc.*

rationalism to pietists; sometimes piloting safely between the Scylla of mental anarchy and the Charybdis of blind traditionalism, but sometimes unwittingly encouraging those predisposed to revolt against all authority. At times the rationalism of the *Guide* may indeed have proved a cankerworm to some simple Jewish minds. But on the whole Jewish legend is certainly right in representing Maimonides as one who miraculously cured people of worms gnawing at their brain<sup>1</sup>. When the Jewish mind was gradually yielding to the stupefaction of mysticism, or straying in the mazes of *Pilpulism*, the severe and sober rationalism of the *Guide* acted as an invaluable antidote against the sleeping sickness which threatened the Jewish intellect. In the *Guide* multitudes of Jews received their first introduction and stimulus to philosophical thinking. Passing by the crowds of obscure, though earnest, thinkers who have left no foot prints in the sands of time; passing by also many distinguished Maimonists, and even anti-Maimonists, we may single out Spinoza and Mendelssohn, Maimon and Krochmal, as worthies who drew their first inspiration from the *Guide*. Spinoza, it is true, appreciated the merits of Maimonides about as little as Mendelssohn appreciated those of Spinoza, about as little indeed as Maimonides himself appreciated the merits of the Jewish philosophers who had preceded him. But Spinoza's indebtedness to Maimonides was very real, for all that. Mendelssohn gladly avowed his obligations to the *Guide* for his hunchback, and much besides. Solomon Maimon's reverence for Maimonides is attested by his confession about the efficacy of his vows by the name of Maimonides, in his struggles with himself—though he unhappily used those vows too sparingly. Krochmal paid homage to the *Guide* by the very title of his own *Guide for the Perplexed of the Time*. By the very manner, however, in which Krochmal modified the title of the older book before adopting it he also indicated the defects of the old *Guide*, the inevitable weakness of all such guides—an inherent incompetence to satisfy completely many ages in succession. Be that as it may, Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*, even apart from its supreme historical interest, contains much that is still suggestive and stimulating, and well deserves the new lease of life which this cheap, convenient, and revised edition of Dr. Friedländer's scholarly translation is sure to win for it.

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<sup>1</sup> See Leo Wiener, *The History of Yiddish Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 33.